


Oklahoma Conservation Partnership Report

September 2014


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VISION: Productive Lands Healthy Environment -- MISSION: Helping People Help the Land

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Chief Weller: NRCS pleased with Farm Bill

Conservation Programs


Conservation programs under the 2014 Farm Bill are off to a strong start, a hearing of a subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee revealed. Conservation, soil health, and Farm Bill implementation were all topics of a hearing of the Subcommittee on Conservation, Energy, and Forestry. **Jason Weller**, chief of USDA's **Natural Resources Conservation Service**, thanked the committee for a strong conservation title in the Farm Bill and said implementation of that title has gone well. "We've actually gotten Title II implemented," Weller said. "We haven't yet gotten the (regulations) implemented because Title II included language that allowed us to use underlying regulations as long as we updated our programs to fit the new law in the statute."

Aside from Farm Bill implementation, Weller said he was encouraged by the enthusiasm for conservation and cover crops demonstrated by those working the land. "We're actually having to run to keep pace with producers," Weller said of advances in soil health and conservation. "They've been true pioneers in these approaches in soil health. We're learning from them."

The conservation programs supported by the 2014 Farm Bill are making a crucial difference in helping producers start soil health management systems on their operations. Soil health management is a systems approach that brings together suites of conservation practices that minimize soil disturbance, diversify soil biota, and maintain living roots and soil cover year round. Since 2009, significant numbers of producers have implemented soil health management practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) as shown in the chart below.

Occurrences of Select Soil Health-Related Practices Applied in EQIP Contracts Fiscal Years 2009 to 2013

Practice Code	Practice Name	Number of Contracts	Amount (Acres)
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	3,468	707,256
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed	4,514	3,040,608
340	Cover Crop	9,541	2,294,294
484	Mulching	3,000	114,015
512	Forage and Biomass Planting	13,062	939,807
528	Prescribed Grazing	6,575	10,072,933
590	Nutrient Management	13,742	5,212,792
Grand Total		53,902	22,381,705

Continued pg. 2 

Chief Weller cont...**Occurrences of Select Soil Health-Related Practices in CSP Contracts Fiscal Years 2010 to 2013**

Practice/ Enhancement Code	Practice Name	Number of Contracts	Planned Units (acres)
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	497	290,333
	Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed	389	192,765
340	Cover Crop	313	85,522
CCR99	Resource-Conserving Crop Rotation	1,484	577,622
PLT02	Monitor key grazing areas to improve grazing management	6,904	13,364,174
SOE05	Intensive no-till (Organic or Non-organic systems)	217	104,463
SQL04	Use of Cover Crop Mixes	2,848	916,493
WQL10	Plant an annual grass-type cover crop that will scavenge residual nitrogen	1,959	667,171
WQL13	High level Integrated Pest Management to reduce pesticide environmental risk	5,567	5,640,044
WQL21	Integrated Pest Management for Organic Farming.	115	61,417
Grand Total		20,293	21,900,003

NRCS is also working with the National Association of Conservation Districts to leverage the expertise and local delivery capacity of Conservation Districts to develop an inventory of demonstration sites to promote adoption of soil health management systems across the nation.

Partnerships are key to the success of improving the health of our nation's soils. The soil health movement is exciting to be part of due to the speed of innovation and adoption between farmers and ranchers, as well as because of the huge array of partners.

ENGINEERING REVIEW**Barnitz Creek Site 1 Final Site Showing**

The final inspection for the rehabilitation of Barnitz Creek Site 1 was completed on September 9, 2014. This site is located in Dewey County near the small town of Leedey. Representatives from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Dewey County Conservation District, RRY Services LLC. (Contractor), the NRCS State Office, Stillwater Watershed Office, and Taloga Field Service Center were present. Some of the main features of the site consisted of installing a new principal spillway inlet tower and conduit, a riprap plunge basin, and widening the auxiliary spillway to a total bottom width of 410'. A relatively new practice of using hydro-mulch to establish vegetation was used on this project.



Hydo-Mulch on auxiliary spillway cut slope



New Principal Spillway Tower

Engineering review cont...**Oklahoma Hosts National Watershed Coalition Workshop**

The National Watershed Coalition (NWC) hosted an Operation and Maintenance workshop August 18-20, 2014. Over 60 participants representing watershed sponsors and NRCS staffs covering 19 states were treated to an excellent conference held at the Bell Cow Creek Ranch in Lincoln County. Attending from Oklahoma NRCS were State Conservation Engineer Chris Stoner and District Conservationists Brandon Bishop and Charles Rogers.

The conference focused on sponsor's responsibilities regarding inspections, maintenance, and monitoring, while also discussing assessments, rehabilitation, and Emergency Action Plans. Participants were treated to lots of good food and demonstrations of maintenance and repair equipment. In addition, there was a field trip to the ARS Hydraulics Research Lab in Stillwater. The final day involved a Train-the-Trainer workshop hosted and presented by Owen Conservation Education Consultants (Keith and Lisa Knauf Owen). Feedback from Oklahoma Conservation District employees in attendance were the need for all watershed sponsors to attend.



Operation and Maintenance

Workshop Participants

Bell Cow Creek Ranch - Lincoln County

Partners in the Spotlight at 3rd Annual Student Water Conference

NRCS State Conservation Engineer, Chris Stoner was joined by OCC's Assistant Director for Water Quality, Greg Kloxin and OWRB's Water Resources Geologist, Chris Neel for a Roundtable Discussion at the 3rd Annual Student Water Conference hosted by OSU. The group described their involvement in water related issues throughout their careers and how they ended up in the positions they now hold. They then answered questions from the more than 40 students, both graduate and undergraduates, from across the country. The focus of the program was to reinforce the importance of water in today's society and to demonstrate how the actions of the students involved in the conference can impact the world's water supplies for generations to come.

**Hispanic Heritage Month 2014: Sept. 15–Oct. 15**

Sept. 15 is the starting point for the celebration because it is the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively.

For More Information:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/contact/sep/>

OUTREACH REVIEW

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partnered with the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) and USDA agencies to hold a *Government to Government Consultation & USDA Programs Informational Workshop*. *Additional USDA agencies participating were: the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Development Agency (RD), Risk Management Agency (RMA) and the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS).*

The informal consultation meeting and workshop was sponsored by the OTCAC and hosted by the Citizen Potawatomi Nation on their Tribal Traditions Grounds, in Shawnee, Oklahoma. The meeting was held on Thursday, September 4, 2014. The lunch was sponsored by OTCAC and was prepared by the Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) catering services. Moderator for the meeting was Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS State Tribal Liaison. Opening and lunch prayer was provided by Justin Neely, CPN.

Providing an overview of their agencies and services available to Tribes were: Gary O Neill, NRCS State Conservationist; Ryan McMullen, RD State Director; Francie Tolle, FSA State Executive Director; Regional Director, Debra Bouziden, RMA; Wil Hundl, Oklahoma State Statistician, NASS; Bruce Maytubby, Southern Plains Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Brent Gohring, Natural Resources Officer for Eastern Oklahoma BIA. The attending Tribes and tribal members participated in an informal open discussion session with the agencies to share with the agencies their tribal needs, concerns and issues that USDA could assist in resolving. All agencies had informational booths available during the workshop. According to Dr. Crouch, "The government to government consultation meeting and workshop was a huge success and provided all agencies with valuable information that they can utilize to move forward to work more effectively with Oklahoma Tribes and tribal members."



Informal consultation with USDA agencies
and Oklahoma Tribes



Oklahoma Tribes and USDA agencies
having a roundtable discussion

Soil Health, Soil Sampling and Climate Change Impacts on Pastureland Management Workshop

Tuesday, October 21, 2014

Canadian County Fairgrounds - Educational Building

220 N. Country Club Rd - El Reno

Pre-registration will begin @ 9am - Workshop begins @ 9:30am

RSVP by noon Oct.17 to the NRCS El Reno FSC 405-262-1958 x 3 or

Carol Crouch 405-612-9331

Outreach review cont...

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), partnered with the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) to sponsor the conference and have a conservation informational booth during the 19th Inter-Tribal Environmental Council (ITEC) Annual Conference. The conference was held on July 29 through July 30, 2014, in Catossa, Oklahoma. The ITEC annual conference provides the opportunity for Tribal representatives, tribal environmental specialist and conservation professionals to obtain a firsthand view of various products, training materials and conservation opportunities. Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS State Tribal Liaison, presented on the success that NRCS has had in developing strong partnership relations between the Tribes and tribal members. Retired NRCS soil scientist, Greg Scott, made a demonstration that illustrated the important of soil health. Curtis Washington, Iowa Nation Natural Resource Specialist, presented on Iowa Nation's buffalo herd success and provided an overview of key points on how to start and maintain a buffalo herd. Robert Hathorne, OCC Public Information Officer, provided conservation information to Tribes at the partnership booth on July 29th and July 30th. Crouch stated, "It is critical to USDA's mission to improve communication of USDA programs that available through USDA agencies to Tribal leaders and tribal members." Crouch added, "being selected to present at the ITEC conference provided the opportunity to increase awareness of all USDA programs and how Tribes and tribal members can to access USDA programs and agencies."



**Curtis Washington, Iowa Nation, visits with
Robert Hathorne, OCC Public Information
Officer at partnership booth**

WATER RESOURCES REVIEW**Status of Oklahoma Watershed Rehabilitation Projects as of 8/21/14**

Watershed	Dam No.	County	Conservation District	Status	
<i>In Planning</i>					
Upper Elk	23D	Beckham	North Fork of Red River CD	Estimated completion 9/1/14	
Boiling Springs	1	Latimer	Latimer County CD	Estimated completion 12/1/14	
Upper Clear Boggy	26	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	Estimated completion 6/1/15	
Rock Creek	2	Latimer	Talihina CD	Estimated completion 12/1/15	
<i>Planning Completed - Awaiting Design</i>					
Sallisaw Creek	32	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending Landrights	
<i>In Design</i>					
Quapaw Creek	15M	Lincoln	Lincoln County CD	Estimated completion 12/1/15	
Barnitz Creek	5	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Estimated completion 10/1/14	
Fourche Maline	7M	Latimer	Latimer County CD	Estimated completion 12/1/15	
Upper Black Bear	62	Noble	Noble County CD		
Rock Creek	15	Murray	Murray County CD	Estimated completion 2/1/15	
Rock Creek	16	Murray	Murray County CD	Estimated completion 2/1/15	
Sallisaw Creek	29	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD		
<i>Planning & Design Completed - Awaiting Construction</i>					
Barntiz Creek	11	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Intitute construction 11/1/14	
Cottonwood Creek	54	Logan	Logan County CD	Pending Landrights	
Sallisaw Creek	34	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending Landrights	
Sallisaw Creek	33	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending	
Sallisaw Creek	28	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD		
Sallisaw Creek	30	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD		
<i>Under Construction</i>					
Barntiz Creek	1	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Estimated completion 9/1/14	
<i>Rehabilitation Completed</i>					
Sandstone Creek	16A	Roger Mills	Upper Washita CD		
Barnitz Creek	14	Dewey	Dewey County CD		
Mill Creek	18	Johnston	Johnston County CD		
Double Creek	1,2,3,4,5,6	Washington	Caney Valley CD		
Cavalry Creek	6	Washita	Washita County CD		
Sandstone Creek	12,17A	Roger Mills	Upper Washita CD		
Sergeant Major Creek	1,2	Roger Mills	Upper Washita CD		
Cobb Creek	2	Washita	Deer Creek CD		
Sallisaw Creek	15,16,20	Adair	Adair County CD		
Big Wewoka Creek	29	Seminole	Seminole County CD		
Cottonwood Creek	17	Canadian	East Canadian CD		
Sallisaw Creek	18M	Adair	Adair County CD		*ARRA
Sugar Creek	L-43	Caddo	West Caddo County CD		*ARRA
Upper Clear Boggy	35	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD		*ARRA
Cobb Creek	1	Washita	Deer Creek CD		
Upper Clear Boggy	36	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD		
Cottonwood Creek	15	Kingfisher	Kingfisher County CD	Decommission	*ARRA
Turkey Creek	9	Washita	Washita County CD		
Upper Clear Boggy	33	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD		*ARRA
Sugar Creek	L-44	Caddo	South Caddo County CD		*ARRA
Upper Clear Boggy	34	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	*American Recovery	*ARRA
Caney-Coon Creek	2M	Coal	Coal County CD	Reinvestment Act	
Sallisaw Creek	26	Adair	Adair County CD		
Ft Cobb Laterals	10	Caddo	South Caddo County CD		

ZONE 1 REVIEW

Cimarron County - Boise City Field Service Center

The BBC contacted Cimarron County Conservation District and NRCS on issues relating to the drought. David Shukman, Science editor and a camera person came to cover the drought. They spoke with a dust bowl survivor, a father/son farmer, OPSU and some folks at the Mesonet office in Norman. David reported on the current drought and some solutions that producers are using to try and cope with the drought. The office took him to some fields that had been blowing during this current drought period.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-27986425>



BBC Science editor, David Shukman



Iris Imler, Cimarron County Conservation District, and Dino Rodriguez, NRCS Soil Conservationist, had the opportunity to go to the public library and teach kids about natural resources. There were between 40-50 students, broke up between two age groups, K-2nd & 3rd -5th grades. Iris and Dino made hand painted birds, pretzels covered with goodies for bird food with the younger kids and the older age group made dirt babies and a dessert explaining the different layers of soil.

Major County - Fairview Field Service Center

On August 22 and 23, 2014, the Fairview Field Office including the NRCS and Major County Conservation District staffed an outreach booth at the local Major County Free Fair. Information was available concerning state and federal programs including Farm Bill programs and general technical assistance available. There were also educational materials available for children / students. There were approximately 500 people in attendance at the fair and C. Bierig and M. Roberts were available to discuss any concerns or questions that arose.

Cindy Bierig, Major County CD



Zone 1 Review cont.....***Garfield County - Enid Field Service Center***

On August 7, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC), USDA agencies and the Garfield County Conservation District partnered to hold a conservation workshop and dinner for local producers, Tribes, tribal members, beginning farmers, veterans and women in agriculture. The workshop was held at the OSU Extension Center, in Enid Oklahoma. The focus of the workshop was to provide an overview of the 2014 Farm Bill programs, livestock disaster program and to elevate the awareness of healthy soil. NRCS state soil scientist, Steve Alspach provided a soil health demonstration with the NRCS rainfall simulator that illustrated the importance of soil health, benefits of no-till, best management practices for pasture and rangeland. FSA program manager, Danny Hole, provide an overview of the livestock disaster program. Representatives from the USDA NRCS, Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Development (RD), Risk Management Agency (RMA) and the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) provided an overview of their 2014 Farm Bill programs and community based funding opportunities. NRCS State Conservationist, Gary O Neill, District Conservationist for Garfield County, Michael Sheik and Garfield County Conservation District board member, Kim Farber provided the welcome. Garfield County producer, Bill Smith provided the prayer for the dinner.



The workshop attendees included local producers, women in agriculture and beginning farmers



NRCS state soil scientist, Steve Alspach, unlocks the secrets of soil health during demonstration with the rainfall simulator

Woods County - Alva Field Service Center

Woods County NRCS assisted 8th grade FFA students from Alva and Freedom, OK with grass boards for the county and state fair. Shelly Oliphant (DC) and Diana Nighswonger (RMS) met with the kids and their teacher, August 20, 2014, brought a few samples of native grasses and showed them how to identify the grasses by their common characteristics.



Alva 8th grade FFA learning to identify grasses



Completed Native Grass Boards

ZONE 2 REVIEW

Craig County -Vinita Field Service Center

The NRCS and the Craig County Conservation District set up an informational booth at the 2014 Craig County Fair. We offered information on NRCS and Oklahoma Conservation Commission cost shared and technical assistance programs. There were also conservation themed comic books for the kids. Information on controlled burning and thistle control were very popular.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Rural Development (RD), Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Craig County Conservation District (CCCD) held an informational meeting at the Craig County fairgrounds in Vinita. Erik Friend, district Conservationist for Craig County provided conservation program information to assist land managers in finding solutions to their resource concerns. The film "The Creeping Menace" an OSU production on Eastern Red Cedar control was shown. Housing and farm loan details were presented by RD and FSA. The details of the new programs for livestock were offered up by Delores Qualls, County Executive Director for FSA.

James Dixon, district conservationist of Washington County, provided information on the benefits of soil health and demonstrated the effects on differing land conditions on the erosion process and its effects on soil quality.

Breakfast was provided to all participants and presenters by the Craig County Conservation District; it included biscuits and gravy, coffee and assorted fruits and juices. Over twenty attendees participated in the success of this event.



Craig County Fair 2014

Delaware County - Jay Field Service Center



Specialty Crops Workshop

Rose, OK

An informational Specialty Crops Workshop was held at the Leach First Baptist Church in Rose, Oklahoma. The meeting was open to the public, but was arranged for by the Hmong Growers Association in Delaware County. The growers association is pursuing and has contracted with a supermarket chain to provide naturally grown fresh produce. This meeting provided information and training on food safety practices for picking, handling, processing, packing and shipping of produce to help protect consumers and to document safe handling of products. This was presented by Dr. Lynn Brandenberger, Dr. William McGlynn and Jason Young, all of OSU Cooperative Extension Service. Michael Ramming, District Conservationist in Delaware County, presented farm bill information on opportunities to apply for programs such as CSP and discussed EQIP in depth with emphasis on the Organic and Seasonal High Tunnel initiatives. Other presentations were made by USDA Risk Management and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture. Over 30 people were in attendance.

Zone 2 Review cont.....***Cherokee County - Tahlequah Field Service Center***

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partnered with the Cherokee Nation and Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) to hold a conservation workshop to answer conservation concerns. The workshop was held on Wednesday, August 20, at the Cherokee Nation Headquarters, in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The workshop was held in the *Tsa La Gi Ballroom*. Dr. Shannon Ferrell, OSU Agriculture Law Professor, presented on *Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures (SPCC), as it relates to Agriculture*. Jeanne Schneider, Lead for USDA Southern Plains Regional Climate Hub, presented on *Climate: Impacts on Pastureland, Crops, Rangeland and Soil Health due to Drought*. Mike Padgett, Farm Service Agency (FSA), updated producers on the livestock disaster program. Matt Ward, NRCS program manager, provide an overview of the 2014 NRCS programs. Josh Nail, Risk Management Agency (RMA), updated producers on Farm Bills changes to crop insurance. Chris DeFreese, Rural Development (RD), provided information on RD programs and community based opportunities. The National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) provided information on the release of the 2012 Ag Census. Muskogee Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) representatives Robert Nix and Justin Vann were available to answer any questions regarding Tribal lands. NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, Chad Kacir, Cherokee Nation Agriculture and Natural Resources Director, Bruce Roberts and State Tribal Liaison, Dr. Carol Crouch provided the welcome. Cherokee Nation tribal member, Roger Vann, provided the opening and lunch prayer. NRCS Oklahoma American Indian Alaskan Native Special Emphasis Program Manager (AI/AN SEPM), Cody Parker, was in attendance and assisted with the workshop. Dr Crouch stated, "This was a very successful workshop and it could not have happened without the partnership NRCS has with the Cherokee Nation and OTCAC."



Center. Tribal member and agriculture producer, Mr. Phil Givens, visits with local farmer

Wagoner County - Wagoner Field Service Center

The Wagoner County NRCS Field Office held a Farm Bill Information/Outreach meeting at the Wagoner Civic Center.

There were 83 persons in attendance, including speakers & staff.

The speakers were Brian Hisey FSA, Jack Carlile FSA Farm Loans, Cord Colwell NRCS, and Jody Campiche Farm Bill expert with the OSU extension



Zone 2 Review cont.....***Okmulgee County - Okmulgee Field Service Center***

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was invited to participate in the Annual Empowering Youth Veterans, Ranchers and Farmers Conference that was held at the OSU Extension Center, in Okmulgee, on July 30 and 31, 2014. The conference was sponsored by the Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative and the Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, Inc. NRCS State Tribal Liaison, Dr. Carol Crouch made a presentation to the youth on *College Readiness*, NRCS Earth Team volunteer program for youth and NRCS Pathway opportunities. Dr. Crouch partnered with Curtis Washington, Iowa Nation, to present the *Buffalo Song*. This presentation provided a history of the buffalo to American Indians and how they utilized every part of the buffalo in their daily life. NRCS Resource Conservationist, Joe Buford, served on a panel of *Youth Agriculture Professionals*. Joe shared with the youth his current position in agriculture and his educational journey to his current position. State Conservationist, Gary O Neill, keynote speaker, provided a welcome and overview of NRCS history, soil health initiative and services that NRCS has been providing for over 77 years. Okmulgee County District Conservationist, Ronald Goedecke, was on the USDA panel that provided an overview on NRCS programs and answered questions from veterans, farmers and ranchers. Assistant State Conservationist (Field Operations) Chad Kacir, was also available to answers questions. According to Crouch, "This workshop provided an opportunity for NRCS to tell our NRCS story; our history, services, volunteer program and career opportunities to youth, veterans and farmers and ranchers."



NRCS Joe Buford shared his career path in agriculture with youth



Curtis Washington, Creek Nation Color guard and Carol Crouch, NRCS

Pawnee County - Pawnee Field Service Center

The Pawnee NRCS Field Office and the Conservation District had a booth at the County Fair September 4th-6th, 2014. CSP & EQIP with producers, had fact sheets and applications on hand. Also handed out Sammy Soil coloring books to elementary students. The booth was viewed by approximately 450 people.



ZONE 3 REVIEW

Custer County - Clinton Field Service Center

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) and the Custer County Conservation District partnered to hold a conservation workshop and dinner for farmers and ranchers on August 5, 2014. The workshop was held at the Frisco Conference Center, in Clinton Oklahoma. Representatives from the USDA NRCS, Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Development (RD), Risk Management Agency (RMA) and the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) provided an overview of their 2014 Farm Bill programs and community based funding opportunities. Malinda Freeman, FSA, provided an overview of the livestock disaster program. Brandy Pietz-Jones, NRCS program manager, updated producers on changes to NRCS programs in the 2014 Farm Bill. Debra Bouziden, Regional Director for RMA, covered crop insurance. NRCS Assistance State Conservationist (Field Operations) David Hungerford, Custer County District Conservationist Steve Kelley and Custer County Conservation District Chairman, Jay Baker, provided the welcome. NRCS state soil scientist, Steve Alspach provided a soil health demonstration with the NRCS rainfall simulator that illustrated the importance of soil health, benefits of no-till, best management practices for pasture and rangeland. According to NRCS State Tribal Liaison, Carol Crouch, "When local producers, youth, women in agriculture and beginning farmers attended the workshop; we know that the workshop was a huge success for NRCS and our partners."



NRCS state soil scientist, Steve Alspach providing a soil health demonstration



Malinda Freeman, FSA, providing an overview of the livestock disaster program

Jackson County - Altus Field Service Center

The Jackson County Conservation District and NRCS Field Office staffed a booth at the Jackson County Free Fair on September 4-6th. They distributed literature and discussed conservation measures and natural resources with the attendees. They also performed a rain barrel demonstration and helped kids paint with soils.

Local school children learn with the soil paint



Zone 3 Review cont.....

Stephens County - Duncan Field Service Center

The local NRCS field offices of Stephens and Cotton County held a Soil Health and Farm Bill presentation at Corum Baptist Church on September 24, 2014. Over 20 people from across the 2 counties came and enjoyed a soil health presentation from Soil Scientist Clay Salisbury as well as hear an informational speech about EQIP and CSP from District Conservationist Dana Davis. Present also was FSA, who gave information about their various programs.



NRCS and Stephens County Conservation District held their annual Plant ID Contest at the Stephens County Fairgrounds August 22, 2014. FFA and 4H students from across the county came to test their skills at identifying 20 different plants. Some of the plants featured were Canada Wildrye, Scribner's Panicum and Hairy Vetch.



Stephens County Plant ID Contest



ZONE 4 REVIEW

Atoka County - Atoka Field Service Center

The Atoka NRCS office is very proud of its “People’s Garden”. According to Stacey Mathis, District Conservationist (and Chief Gardener) “This year’s efforts include Brussels sprouts, chives, alfalfa, cotton, tomatoes, pole beans (yard-long), habanero peppers, tobacco, okra, oats, and garlic (that has already been harvested).”



The “People’s Garden” – Atoka

Hughes County - Holdenville Field Service Center

Andrea Jones, Secretary for the HCCD attended the Hughes County Cattlemen's Association meeting on Saturday, September 20, at the Holdenville Expo building. She gave a presentation on Blue Thumb stream monitoring and discussed the physical attributes of a healthy stream. There were over 100 people in attendance.

Andrea Jones, Secretary for
the HCCD



Zone 4 Review cont..... Hughes County

This summer the Hughes County Conservation District (HCCD) cleared/sprayed brush on over 20 of its 37 watershed structures, and 2 structures transitioned from low to high hazard. Muscogee Creek Nation youth workers assisted with the brush removal.

*BEFORE**AFTER*

The Hughes County Conservation District (HCCD) hosted the county Land Judging contest on Saturday, August 23, 2014, during the Hughes County Free Fair. Twenty-one students from Calvin, Holdenville, Moss and Wetumka schools competed with a total of 6 teams and 1 individual participating. HCCD worked closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Hughes County OSU Extension office to provide the students with soil texture types and booklets for a land judging school which was taught by Vernon Thompson of Moss School and Dayla Glover of Wetumka School. The students learned how to identify the different textures of Oklahoma soils and how to determine land features such as slope, erosion, permeability, runoff and recommended land treatments.

Contest participant Marissa Venable from Moss School measuring the depth of the top soil and identifying the soil profile.

Other activities of the HCCD include school events such as the annual speech contest, the 4th grade fishing clinic, and the Moss and Thomas schools outdoor classrooms.



Zone 4 Review cont.....***Soil Health Seminar***

Thirty-nine local producers attended a Soil Health Seminar held at Wes Watkins Technology Center in Wetumka on September 18. The event was hosted as a joint effort among the Wewoka, Okemah and Holdenville field offices and the Wes Watkins Technology Center's Agricultural Business Management Program as an outreach opportunity for the community, focusing on Soil Health.

The seminar kicked off with a welcome from Kelli Ogle representing Wes Watkins Technology Center. Steve Alspach, NRCS State Soil Scientist, then spoke briefly about soil health and the rainfall simulator. The group then gathered outside to view a demonstration which simulated a 1.5" rainfall event on different types of soil cover including native range, conventional till (bare soil), and no-till. This was followed by a question and answer session about what was viewed and what inferences could be made.

Yates Adcock, Ranch manager of Middle Creek Ranch and Hughes County producer, spoke of the benefits of soil health and what things they are having success with at their Ranch.



Holdenville, Wewoka and Okemah NRCS Field offices partner with Wes Watkins Technology Center to host Soil Health Seminar

Steve Alspach, NRCS State Soil Scientist, presents rainfall simulator



Zone 4 Review cont.....

NRCS participated at the Choctaw Nation Festival that was held August 28th through September 1st, at their traditional grounds, in Tuskahoma, Oklahoma. The Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival attracts over 100,000 visitors to enjoy tribal heritage activities, an intertribal powwow, Choctaw cultural exhibitions, stickball games, arts and crafts, free concerts and carnival rides. This annual Tuskahoma event offers activities for all ages including sports tournaments, quilting demonstrations, live performances, buffalo tours and more. The Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival kicks off with the Choctaw Princess Pageant where one lucky contestant is crowned Little Miss, Junior Miss and Miss Choctaw Nation.

NRCS had an informational booth and soil health demonstration during the festival. Retired NRCS State Scientist, Greg Scott, conducted a soil health demonstration with the NRCS rainfall simulator to illustrate the importance of soil health. NRCS employees assisting with the NRCS informational booth were; Jamey Wood, Derek Kelso, Tom James, Malcom Jones, Cindy Ward and Amanda Stanford. Youth, professionals, tribal members, veterans, educators and producers received over 2000 pieces of NRCS materials such as; 2014 Farm Bill fact sheets, *Backyard Conservation*, book markers, NRCS American Indian Heritage poster, the *Be a Friend to the Pollinator* booklet and the NRCS *Unlock the Secrets of Soil Health* brochure.



Left to right: Malcom Jones and Derek Kelso work the NRCS information booth at the Choctaw Nation Festival



During the Choctaw Festival, one lucky Choctaw contestant was crowned Little Miss, Junior Miss and Miss Choctaw Nation

Let your children grow up to be farmers.

Let them know what it is like to be free from fluorescent lights and laser pointer meetings. Let them challenge themselves to be forever resourceful and endlessly clever. Let them whistle and sing loud as they like without getting called into an office for "disturbing the workforce." Let them commute down a winding path with birdsong instead of a freeway's constant growl. Let them grow up not having to ask another adult for permission to go to the dentist at 2 p.m. on a Thursday. Let them get dirty. Let them cry at the beauty of fallow earth they just signed the deed for. Let them bring animals into this world. Let them wake up during a snowstorm and fight drifts at the barn door instead of traffic. Let them learn what *real* work is. Let them find happiness in the understanding that success and wealth are not the same thing. Let them skip the fancy wedding. Let them forget four years of unused college. Let them go.

Being a farmer means wanting to do it more than anything else. It means giving up things other people take for granted as givens, like travel and the latest fashion, new cars and 401k plans. It means making choices your peers won't understand, your family will disapprove of, and other farmers will scoff at. It means making a decision and owning it, *really* owning it the way few people get to own anything in their lives anymore. Let your children grow up to know this responsibility. Let them literally put food on the table, lift up their bootstraps and learn how much effort a life worth living entails.

There are mountaintop rides on a draft horse, meals that were once chicks and seeds, and finding a spiritual home in the everyday work and rhythms of life.

And that may be the best reason to let your children grow up to become farmers: they can feed themselves. They can achieve the most basic of human needs in a society clueless about how to take care of themselves without a car and a supermarket. Becoming a farmer isn't in financial fashion right now, but it will be again. As long as people need to eat there will be a business in doing so, and it's up to each farmer to find his or her niche, celebrate it, unapologetically accept good money for it, and keep doing it far past the point of reason.